To Make a Worthy Contribution
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[Article by I. P. Trofimov, deputy head of the Department of Transport and Communications of the CPSU Central Committee, under the "Components of Acceleration: Scientific-Technical Progress" rubric: "To Make Worthy Contribution"]

[Text] The USSR Ministry of Communications has a great scientific potential. The sector has two scientific-technical institutes with branches, a central design office, and two specialized planning organizations. More than 10,000 scientific associates, designers, and planners work in them, including 23 doctors of sciences and 500 candidates of sciences.

Significant amounts of resources have been allocated for the scientific research and experimental design work in the 12th Five-Year-Plan.

However, the level and rate at which communications is being developed are not sufficient to meet the needs of the country's economy. The communications equipment being used lags seriously behind the best foreign models from the standpoint of power- and material-intensiveness, reliability, and above all, quality. It is no accident that in its decree entitled "Work of the USSR Ministry of Communications to Improve the Telephone and Other Forms of Communications Provided to the Public," the CPSU Central Committee noted serious shortcomings in the extent of modern equipment in use at communications enterprises and demanded that the appropriate ministries and departments radically increase the technical level, improve the quality, and increase the competitiveness of communications equipment. The USSR Ministry of Communications has been charged with taking immediate measures to accelerate the development, production, and introduction of state-of-the-art hardware in communications networks throughout the country and to work quickly to redirect the appropriate scientific and production subdivisions toward the output of equipment with specifications equal to those of the leading world models.

All these large-scale, consuming, and technically complex tasks must be accomplished by using the new engineering and technology, by significantly increasing the effectiveness of sectorial science, and by introducing the scientific-technical progress that has been attained.

The development of telephone communications is a great source of concern. Resources are still being used weakly in this area. According to specialists' estimates, there are approximately 3 million unused numbers in the municipal and rural telephone networks. This situation could be corrected somewhat by obtaining additional cable production or by using effective hardware. The USSR Ministry of Communications thus charged the Central Communications Scientific Research Institute [TsNIIS] with developing equipment that would make it possible to connect several telephones into one line independently of one another. After 3 years of work the TsNIIS produced this type of equipment, but only for two telephones. Then the institute needed another 5 years to develop a new version of the equipment; this time, however, it could be used for 10 telephones. However, the technology created turned out to be unsuitable for operation because appropriate telephones did not exist yet and because the equipment cost more than 2,000 rubles. This is a vivid example of the superficial attitude of the institute's scholars (Comrade Varakin is the head) toward the work entrusted to them and the absence of any demands on the part of the directors of the USSR Ministry of Communications.

It is no secret that, generally speaking, obsolete system exchanges whose technical and economic indicators do not meet modern needs are used in the country's telephone networks. They occupy large production areas, demand significant operating expenditures and service personnel, and fail to provide quality communications. As early as 1978 to 1980 the USSR Ministry of the Communications Equipment Industry and USSR Ministry of Communications were charged with developing and organizing series production of and equipment complex for intercity and municipal automatic telephone exchanges [ATS] based on modern electronics. Scholars at the TsNIIS needed more than 10 years to create an intercity automatic telephone exchange that is now virtually obsolete. No telephone exchanges have been created for operation in cities. Our country needs to purchase electronic telephone exchanges abroad. But it is a well-known fact that import technology alone will not remedy the current state of telephone communications.

The branches of the TsNIIS do not operate any better either. The Leningrad branch of the TsNIIS (head, Comrade Golubev) worked for more than 5 years to develop automated operation centers while new progressive methods of servicing communications equipment by using computer technology have been developed and are already being used in a number of telephone networks including those in Leningrad, Moscow, and Tallin. These methods have made it possible to eliminate faults quickly and significantly reduce the number of faults that do occur. In this important area, science has been on the sidelines.

The sector's scientific research institutes are not devoting nearly enough attention to problems in developing pay communications services. To date, science has not worked out the scientific, technical, or organizational forms for developing pay telephone services—reference-consultative and information services about the operation of transport, commercial, and entertainment enterprises or similar services dealing with medical, psychological, and educational topics. It is a well-known fact that such services have been widely disseminated

abroad. Unfortunately, sectorial science does not know the sector's most urgent needs and is not contributing to the accelerated development of pay services for the public.

Or take the following topic, for example. The creation of fiber optic transmission systems is currently a promising direction. As is well known, such systems have significant advantages compared with existing cable communications lines. Industrial production of light pipe technology and cable has been begun in practically all developed capitalist countries, and long-term programs to introduce light pipe communications lines are being implemented.

In our country this field is developing very slowly. The TsNIIS has been given the responsibility of serving as the head organization in the development of fiber optic systems for the country's Unified Automated Communications Network. More than 150 of the institute's staff have been working on this problem (Comrade Muradyan is the department head), but any progress has yet to be seen. The developers at the TsNIIS have not established good contacts with the related enterprises at the USSR Ministry of the Communications Industry [Minpromsvyazi] or the Ministry of the Electronics Industry [Minelektronprom]. Many equipment prototypes have serious technical omissions and are unfit for use, and there is no cable with the specified characteristics. This situation cannot continue to be tolerated, and intervention on the part of the ministry is necessary.

Improving television broadcast quality is a large sociopolitical task. Unfortunately, in our country there are currently about 17 million persons (including 11 million rural residents) who cannot receive television programs with the required quality. The deterioration of television reception conditions in large cities on account of the radio shadow from tall buildings is a serious problem. In Moscow alone there are about 2 million persons living in areas with unsatisfactory reception. Modern large collective-reception systems are being introduced slowly, and the use of the existing systems has been poorly organized. Ministry specialists and scholars at the Radio Scientific Research Institute [NIIR] (head, Comrade Minashin) are still not working actively enough on solving these problems.

The operation of the post office has recently been subject to serious criticism, including criticism in the central press. The shortcomings in the operation of the subsector have related above all to the fact that, at the majority of the country's post offices, mail processing is handled amateurishly. Sometimes postal enterprises are located in cramped and inconvenient locations. Mechanization and automation for sorting letters, printed matter, and parcels are being introduced slowly.

Under the conditions of restructuring, the party has attributed great importance to keeping workers informed in a timely manner about all events occurring in domestic and international life. The timely delivery of newspapers and other periodicals to the public is the main thing; nevertheless, there are still serious shortcomings here. Significant numbers of copies of the central newspapers PRAVDA and IZVESTIYA are not delivered to subscribers on time, especially in regions of Siberia, the Far East, Central Asia, and the North. Little in the way of modern technology is used to package, distribute, and transport newspapers and magazines. And the labor productivity at such enterprises is increasing slowly.

There have recently been many complaints in connection with the creation in a number of areas throughout the country of so-called self-service centers through which citizens obtain newspapers independently. This form of service is not, in principle, appropriate to the purpose of the post office, and the ministry has, with just cause, criticized the post office sharply for running these centers. This is certainly not the direction in which service to the public should be developed!

The work being done to create temporary scientific production collectives [VNPK] in the sector deserves attention. There are, nevertheless, difficulties associated with the activity of such collectives—difficulties connected with delineating the rights and responsibilities of such collectives, financing operations, and offering material incentives to members of VNPK.

Sectorial science's lagging behind is due in no small part to the insufficiently active work of the institutes' party committees and offices.

The institute's party organizations are obliged to make full use of their right to monitor the administration's activities. Political methods should be in operation during the process: leaders should not be replaced; initiative should be developed on all fronts; and each individual, from the ordinary associate to the director, should be made more responsible for unity of word and deed, for unconditional implementation of plans, and for the efficiency and quality of labor.

The party committees should learn to work under conditions of intensified democracy, help workers overcome their shortcomings more quickly, and use existing resources.

The problems of accelerating scientific-technical progress and accountablity for the contribution made by one institute or another should constantly be at the center of attention.

The 70th anniversary of the Great October Revolution, a great holiday for which the entire country is preparing, is approaching. The Address of the CPSU Central Committee to the Soviet People states, "Our economy is being tested for its effectiveness, its receptivity to advanced technologies, its ability to produce first-class products, and its ability to endure any competition in the world markets."

Scholars, designers, planners, and all workers in the communications sector must respond to the party's address with their deeds, must devote their maximum efforts to increasing the efficiency with which the sector operates, and must thereby make a worthy contribution to the country's economy.

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